

---

# **IN OTHER WORDS**

**An Inclusive  
Language Guide**

---

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
The Generic "He" .....	4
The Generic "Man" .....	5
Feminine Endings .....	6
Sexist Quotations .....	6
Forms of Address .....	7
Parallel Treatment .....	8
Visual Communication .....	9
Audio communication .....	10
Yukon First Nations .....	10
Persons with disabilities .....	12
Synonyms: A Quick Reference Guide .....	13
Dictionary .....	15
Other Resources .....	24



# Introduction

**"Public communications will respectfully portray and address Yukon citizens of differing gender, culture, age, beliefs and abilities. The language used in government communications will reflect this principle."**

*The Communications Policy, approved by the Yukon government Cabinet in 1994*

This guide has been designed to help you communicate in ways that reinforce the full and equal participation of all people in society, regardless of sex, culture, age, beliefs and abilities.

As a guide, this booklet is to help you incorporate inclusive language in your communications.

It is not an exhaustive list, but if you apply the principles and the spirit, along with a little common sense, you should get results.

The most common stereotyping involves gender exclusive language. For that reason, most of this guide will focus on gender equity. By taking a second look at what is said, and how it is said, and finding "other words" you can ensure the complete range of human characteristics and attributes is equally applied to both women and men.

Sections on First Nations persons, persons of colour and persons with disabilities have also been included.

The most important thing to remember is that there are no set rules.

*Be open-minded.*

# The Generic "He"

Historically, the word "he" was used to mean everyone: male and female. Today, we are striving to make language more inclusive.

Referring to "the employee" as "he" is not accurate in an age when women are employees as well. This most typically happens in sentences like:

*"Each employee will complete his time sheet at the end of the shift."*

Here are some solutions to help solve this problem.

- Make the sentence plural:

*"Employees will complete their time sheets at the end of the shift."*

- Address the reader directly:

*"Complete your time sheets at the end of the shift."*

- Eliminate the pronoun:

*"Each employee will complete time sheets at the end of the shift."*

- Replace masculine pronouns with an article:

*"Each employee will complete a time sheet at the end of the shift."*

- Use "it" when referring to an animal whose gender is unknown, or to an object:

*"The ship was damaged and it sank."*

Avoid using "she" or "her" to describe nature, nations, ships, cars, engines and gas tanks (as in "Fill'er up"). It is important to remember to use sex specific pronouns where appropriate (when the person being referred to really is a "he" or a "she.")

# The Generic "Man"

The rationale behind this language usage is the same as that for the generic "he," namely, that "man" and "mankind" has been used to describe a human being, a person, an individual or the entire human race.

Substitutes could be person, humankind, humanity.

Other examples include forefathers, brotherhood, fellows and sons. A closely related issue is that of using words containing "man" for both sexes such as businessman and chairman.

Here are some alternatives:

- Use words like business owners, business executives, business managers, business people and the business sector instead of "businessman." The substitution of the word "person" for man is not the only, or even preferred, solution. It can sound awkward.

- Words like artificial, manufactured, hand-made, synthetic, machine-made, simulated and imitation are all good substitutes for "man-made" and are more accurate.

- Chair is a good alternative to chairman. Moderator, committee head, presiding officer, coordinator, president, department head, leader facilitator and director are also possible substitutes.

- Not all words that contain "man" or "boy" are sexist. Examples that are not sexist include amen, boycott, emancipation, manager, mandate, maneuver, manual, manufacture, menagerie. Ombudsman is a word the Yukon government uses. The original Swedish word is inclusive (the "man" portion of the words

translates to "one") however in English it tends to be seen as gender-specific. Alternatives include advocate, complaints investigator, trouble-shooter.

## Feminine Endings

Feminine endings such as "-ess," "-ette," and "-trix" are problematic for three reasons:

- They perpetuate the notion that the male is the norm and the female the subset or secondary classification. Actor and actress suggests that men are the real actors and women are imitations of them.
- They may not have an equivalent meaning as the "male" version. They can be cute or trivializing (as in majorette, usherette, starlet) or not have the equivalent authority or prestige - consider the very different meanings conveyed by "governor" versus "governess."
- A poet is a poet whether male or female. The same goes for a hero, an actor, a waiter, or a host. These words should not be preceded with the word "female" as in "female poet."

## Sexist Quotations

A huge number of famous quotations in our culture are from men and many are male-biased in today's language.

*"The best use of laws is to teach men to trample bad laws under their feet."*

- Wendell Phillips

Here are a few ways to handle this:

- Find a better, non-sexist quote that gives the same meaning or has the same message.
- Paraphrase the remark and omit the quotation marks: **Wendell Phillips suggested that the best use of laws was to teach people to trample bad laws underfoot.**
- Use only part of the quotation: **Wendell Phillips said the best use for laws was to teach people "to trample bad laws under their feet."**

## Forms of Address

When you are addressing a woman and you don't know if she prefers Mrs., Miss, Ms or no courtesy title, ask. You can also use her full first name or first initials, use a title (Dr., Prof., Superintendent, Director) with her surname or use the same form as she herself used if you have received correspondence from her.

When you don't know who you're addressing, there are a number of alternatives to "Dear Sir."

- Use Dear Sir/Madam or Madams and Sirs.
- Use the full name: Dear Chris Clark.
- Use only a title (manager, publisher, councilor, director, committee member, home owner, parent, reader, teacher).
- Use a company or organization name (Dear Canadian Tire, Department of Small Business).



# Parallel Treatment

Speak of people as persons, irrespective of their gender or culture. Why speak of a "female" police officer or a "male" nurse or a "First Nations" cabinet minister? A term like wife and husband is parallel; man and wife is not. Ask yourself: Would I describe this the same way about the opposite sex?

Some tips:

- Don't give information about a woman or a person of colour that you wouldn't normally give about men or Caucasians. This includes marital status, children or physical appearance. Some examples:

*"The manager of social services, a petite blond, is a dynamic speaker."*

Change to:

*"The manager of social services is a dynamic speaker."*

*"Peter Jones, husband of city councilor Margaret Johns and father of one daughter, is the new manager of public housing."*

Change to:

*"Peter Jones is the new manager of public housing."*

*"John Brown, a First Nations person, has been presented with the Commissioner's award for bravery."*

Change to:

*"John Brown has been presented with the Commissioner's award for bravery."*

- Parallel language should also be used when referring to gender groups: Men and ladies should be men and women. "The men from Health and Social Services

and the girls from Finance..." should be "the men from Health and Social Services and the women from Finance."

- Women shouldn't be described as dependents. "The workers and their wives demonstrated at the site" should read "The workers and their partners demonstrated at the site."

- Avoid hidden sexism, or words that are traditionally used only to describe specific genders. Shrill is often used to describe a woman's voice, but never a man's. Also, you may be using stereotypes: all child care is done by women, all athletes are men. To check for unconscious portrayals such as these, try substituting a man for a woman or vice versa. If your communication still sounds reasonable, you have probably avoided hidden sexism and non-parallel treatment.

## Visual Communication

Visual communication is an important part of the way the government gets in touch with the public. It can include photographs, illustrations, video or film productions.

Even if one gender or race dominates a profession or occupation, government should not be perpetuating this dominance by portraying men and women, native, non-native people and ethnic groups, only in traditional roles. In order to communicate more inclusively, take care to show:

- men, women and people of various cultures actively participating in all aspects of life in the home, work and community;

- men and women of various ages, cultures and differing capabilities;
- men, women and people of various cultures not portrayed solely in traditional occupations. For example, women could be shown as carpenters and heavy equipment operators while men could be shown as nurses and child care workers;
- success achieved by individuals in all fields of endeavor including: sports, arts, science, business, medicine, etc.

## **Audio communication**

Guidelines for audio communications follow the same principles as those for written and visual. Use a variety of voices, including women's and First Nations people, in a variety of situations and positions.

Don't try to mimic a First Nations person's voice. It's both insulting and ineffective.

## **Yukon First Nations**

*"If you visit or live with people who have a culture and language different from your own, it may take a long time to learn the proper behavior associated with speech. There are usually rules about who should speak first, or even when to speak at all.*

*"Many older Yukon Indians think white people ask too many questions, order people about too much and talk about things that should not be discussed. White people sometimes think that Indians do not talk enough."*

*-Catharine McClellan*

There are a variety of acceptable terms to describe Yukon First Nations. "First Nations people" and "aboriginal people" are widely accepted. Many, however, will tell you "Yukon Indians" or "Yukon natives" are both completely acceptable - especially elders.

The key is to be open to all of these and make sure you listen and respect and accept First Nations culture and tradition. If you're not sure about something - ask the First Nations people.

- Don't use cliché phrases like "moccasin telegraph" and "smoke signals."
- Don't give out inaccurate historical and cultural information. Yukon history does not begin in 1896 when gold was discovered.
- First Nations culture and tradition should not be trivialized or minimized.
- Instead of bands or tribal councils, use the term First Nations. For example, rather than Kwanlin Dun band, use Kwanlin Dun First Nation. Alternatives include community, people or nation.
- In visual communications, make sure you reflect First Nations people and people of various cultures at all levels and in a range of occupations and settings.
- Avoid words like "tolerate" when referring to issues of cultural diversity. Use "respect" or "value" instead.
- The term "First Nations" should not be used as a noun to describe an individual person, as in "Bill and Sally are First Nations from Carmacks."

# Persons with disabilities

The most important thing to remember when talking about persons with disabilities is to avoid words or phrases which imply a value judgment about people's capabilities.

- Phrases like "the disabled," "the handicapped," "the blind," "the deaf," are not appropriate. Use "persons with disabilities," "persons with visual impairments," "persons with hearing impairments" or "persons with mental disabilities."
- Also, stay away from words like "coping" with a disability, "confined" to a wheelchair or "wheelchair bound." They portray people as having to be cared for or pitied. The same goes for "afflicted," "crippled," "wheelchair victim."
- Don't use words or phrases that set people with disabilities apart from others.
- Stress ability, rather than disability. Avoid reference to a disability where it is not pertinent to the phrase, article or story:  
*"The deaf accountant spotted the error."*  
Change to:  
*"The accountant spotted the error."*
- In visual communications, show persons with disabilities working in a variety of situations with other employees.

# Synonyms: A Quick Reference Guide

This is a selection of biased terms with preferred alternatives. Note: always be specific, keep it simple and avoid complicated or obtuse terms.

- blind:** person with a visual impairment
- businessman:** business executive, member of the business community, business leader, entrepreneur, industrialist, manager, business owner. Or, be specific: public relations officer, stockbroker, advertising executive.
- cameraman:** camera operator, camera crew
- chairman:** chair, chairperson, moderator, committee head, presiding officer, convener, coordinator, leader, facilitator, director, manager
- craftsman:** artisan, skilled worker, trade worker, craftsperson
- craftsmanship:** handiwork, artisanry, artisanship. Or, mention the characteristics of the piece or skills used to make it.
- crippled:** person with a disability
- deaf:** person with a hearing impairment
- disabled:** person with a disability
- fisherman:** fisher, angler
- forefathers:** ancestors, forebearers
- foreman:** supervisor, manager, boss, superintendent
- handicapped:** person with a disability
- journeyman:** journey level, trade worker, skilled worker. Or, use specific job title.
- layman:** layperson, average citizen, ordinary person
- maiden name:** birth name, family name

<b>man-hours:</b>	worker/work/working/staff/labour/operator hours, hours of work, time
<b>mankind:</b>	humanity, persons, humankind
<b>man-made:</b>	artificial, synthetic, made, manufactured, fabricated, machine-made
<b>manned:</b>	staffed, crewed, operated, run
<b>manpower:</b>	workforce, personnel, staff, human resources, workers, employees, labour
<b>master:</b>	<i>as a noun:</i> chief, head, leader, superior, director, supervisor, boss, expert, instructor, specialist, professional <i>as an adjective:</i> expert, accomplished, skilled, gifted <i>as a verb:</i> learn, dominate, govern, control, command, be successful at, acquire proficiency at
<b>men working:</b>	crew working, work zone
<b>patron:</b>	customer, shopper, purchaser, client, sponsor, benefactor, backer, supporter, promoter
<b>repairman:</b>	repairer, technician. Or, be specific: plumber, carpenter, mechanic.
<b>right-hand man:</b>	assistant, aide, helper, attendant, co- worker, right hand
<b>spokesman:</b>	speaker, representative, agent, press agent, press secretary
<b>unmanned:</b>	unstaffed, uninhabited, crewless, remote control, automatic pilot
<b>working mother:</b>	wage earner, job holder, woman employed outside the home
<b>workmanship:</b>	work, construction, handiwork, handicraft, artisanship, skill, craft, technique, style, competence, performance
<b>workmen's compensation:</b>	workers' compensation

# Dictionary

- actress:** actor. Specifying gender is unnecessary and supports the male-as-norm and female-as-exception system. It can be used if a woman prefers it.
- alderman:** council member, councillor
- anchorman:** anchor, newscaster, announcer, broadcaster
- bachelor:** single, single person, unmarried person. First, examine the need to label people according to their marital status. Also, note the non-parallel connotation of bachelor and spinster.
- blond, brunette redhead:** First examine the need to identify a person by hair colour. If necessary, it should not be used as a noun, as in: "The blond who works in finance." This rarely means the "male" blond who works in finance.
- boyfriend:** friend, male friend, date, companion, significant other, partner, lover
- brotherhood:** amity, society, association, organization, kinship, companionship, friendship, comradeship, unity, community, brotherhood and sisterhood
- brotherly love:** kindheartedness, goodwill, philanthropy, charity, generosity, benevolence, unselfishness
- businessman:** business executive, member of the business community, business leader, entrepreneur, industrialist, manager, business owner. If used fairly: businessman and businesswoman, or business person. Or be specific: public relations officer, stockbroker, advertising executive.
- cameraman:** camera operator, camera crew
- career girl:** Consider whether you would use "career boy"



and then handle the situation in the same way. Use professional, business executive, full-time employee. Or be specific: sales representative, scientist, social worker, professor.

**chairman:** chair, chairperson, moderator, committee head, presiding officer, convener, coordinator, leader, facilitator, director, manager.

**city fathers:** city leaders/founders/councillors/elders/officials/legislators

**cleaning lady:** household worker, cleaner, house cleaner, houseworkers, housekeeper, office cleaner, janitor, maintenance worker, custodian

**clergyman:** clergy, cleric, member of the clergy. Or, be specific: pastor, minister, deacon, bishop, chaplain, preacher, etc.

**coed:** student. Originally means "coeducational student" but has come to refer almost exclusively to women; there is no male counterpart.

**common man:** common citizen/person/human/human being/voter, average citizen/person, ordinary person/citizen, layperson, taxpayer, voter, resident, citizen, commoner, rank and file.

**craftsman:** artisan, craftworker, skilled worker, trade worker, handicraft worker, craftsman

**craftsmanship:** artisanry, artisanship, handiwork, skilled-craft work, or mention the characteristics of the piece or skills used to make it.

**elder statesman:** senior/long-time/career diplomat, skilled/career/experienced politician

**farm wife:** farmer; about two-thirds of the farmers in the world are women

**father:** as generic verb: parent, nurture, support, protect, take care of, look after, be

- fathers:** responsible for, rear children, supervise  
as generic noun: ancestors, forebearers,  
predecessors, forerunners, leaders, founders,  
trail-blazers, innovators, fathers and mothers
- fellow:** Often accepted as an inclusive term, as when  
someone receives an academic fellowship, but  
is also a synonym for male person. This is  
the most common perception of the word. If  
you say, "I saw a fellow dancing in the street  
today," there is no doubt you meant a man.  
Substitutes for the noun include: partner,  
colleague, co-worker, companion, associate,  
peer. As an adjective: similar, alike,  
comparable, parallel.
- fellowship:** companionship, association, camaraderie,  
friendship, comradeship, togetherness,  
neighbourliness, solidarity, kinship, unity,  
society
- female:** As an adjective: use only when you would use  
"male" in a similar situation.
- fireman:** firefighter
- fisherman:** fisher, angler, fisherman and fisherwoman.
- forefathers:** see "fathers (generic)"
- foreman:** supervisor, manager, boss, superintendent,  
unless speaking of a specific position
- fraternity:** organization, society, fraternity and sorority,  
secret society, association, community.
- friendship, kinship:** (see fellowship)
- fraternize:** associate, socialize, mingle, band together,  
keep company, consort
- freshman:** first-year student, frosh, beginner, newcomer
- girl:** Girl is reserved for pre-teens or at least those  
under 15; use woman, young woman.  
Consider if you would use "boy" in a similar  
context.

- girlfriend:** friend, female friend, date, companion, significant other, partner, lover
- hero/heroine:** Use hero for both men and women. Heroine is "a female hero" or a sub-set of hero.
- him/himself/his:** (generic) Don't use when you mean "him or her," "himself or herself," or "his or hers."
- housewife:** homemaker, consumer, woman who works in the home, householder, home owner, woman, shopper, customer, parent
- husband:** spouse. If using gender-specific language, make sure it is parallel: wife and husband, man and woman, not man and wife.
- journeyman:** journey level, journeyman and journeywoman, journeyperson. If a more general sense: trade worker, skilled worker or use specific job title.
- lady (noun):** Use woman unless you specifically mean someone of elegant and refined manners and would use gentleman in a similar context for a man. Lady is often used to trivialize and is not generally used in the same way as gentleman.
- lady (adjective):** If it is necessary to identify gender, use "female." First ask if you would use "male" in a similar context.
- layman:** layperson, nonprofessional, average citizen, ordinary person
- longshoreman:** longshore worker, stevedore, dockworker, shoreworker, wharfworker
- madam:** Acceptable when used for women in the same way as sir is used for a man. Do not use it to refer to someone connected with prostitution, as this discounts a term that is otherwise a respectable parallel to sir.

- mailman:** mail/letter carrier, postal worker, mail deliverer
- man (generic):** person(s), people, human(s), human being(s), individual(s), one, mortal(s), body, somebody, someone, anyone, living soul(s), society, human society/nature/species, early peoples, we, us, ourselves, humankind, humanity, all generations, folk(s), the public, the general public, the world, community, the larger community, nation, state, body politic, population, inhabitant(s), adult(s), citizen(s), worker(s), member(s), participant(s)
- man:** used to describe an adult male human being, the only non-sexist use of the noun
- man (verb):** operate, staff, run, supply a crew/personnel for, work, serve at/on, employ staff, occupy, equip
- manhandle:** mistreat, maltreat, mishandle, maul, batter, beat up, injure, abuse
- man-hours:** full-time equivalent or person years
- manhunt:** chase, dragnet, search for a fugitive
- man in the street:** See "common man."
- mankind:** See "man (generic)"
- man-made:** artificial, synthetic, made, manufactured, fabricated, machine-made, constructed, simulated, plastic, human-made, result of human activity
- manned:** staffed, crewed, operated, run
- manpower:** workforce, personnel, human resources, staff, available workers, workers, employees, labour, people, labour force/supply, staffing, human power/energy, staff time
- manship:** avoid words with this suffix. See "craftsmanship," "sportsmanship," "workmanship."

- man-to-man:** player-to-player, one-to-one, person-to-person, face-to-face, frank, honest, serious, straight-forward, heart-to-heart, private, on-the-level
- master (noun):** chief, head, leader, superior, director, supervisor, boss, sovereign, expert, instructor, specialist, professional. Master is generally perceived as a masculine word although many of its uses are inclusive. The female word "mistress" does not have a parallel meaning. Master can usually be avoided as there are many appropriate alternatives.
- master (adjective):** expert, accomplished, proficient, skilled, excellent, competent, gifted
- master (verb):** be successful at, learn, acquire proficiency at, subdue, defeat, overpower, rule, dominate, govern, control, command
- master:** (of ceremonies) host, emcee, leader/ coordinator of ceremonies, speaker, moderator
- men working:** crew working, workers, work zone
- middleman:** go-between, agent, third party, negotiator, broker, mediator, arbiter, arbitrator, representative, messenger, referee
- Miss:** Use "Ms" except for people who indicate a preference for Miss or Mrs. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, Miss meant a young woman and Mrs. meant a mature woman. It is only since then that these terms have been used to label women in relationship to men. Men are rarely labeled in relationship to women.
- Mrs.:** See "Miss"
- Ms:** This title can be used as the opposite of, and parallel to, Mr.
- old boys' network:** There may be times when this is accurate. However, it is becoming rare that a

- network is all one gender. Use network, professional/career network, business connections/contacts
- ombudsman:** ombuds/ombud service, ombudscommittee, watchdog, investigator, referee, intermediary, monitor, guardian of the public good. The original Swedish word is inclusive but in English it tends to be seen as gender-specific.
- paternalism:** parentalism, authoritarian parentalism, authoritarianism, political intrusion. Retain the term when you mean specifically male hierarchical domination.
- patron:** sponsor, benefactor, backer, supporter, promoter, customer, shopper, purchaser, client
- policeman:** police officer, peace officer, officer of the law. Or, be specific: police sergeant/constable/detective.
- repairman:** repairer, technician. Or, be specific: car mechanic, plumber, carpenter, etc.
- right-hand man:** right hand, deputy, assistant, aide, helper, attendant, co-worker, subordinate
- salesman:** sales clerk, sales representative/associate/agent, agent, seller, vendor, solicitor, salesperson.  
Plural: sales staff, sales force, salespeople
- sons (generic):** children, heirs, offspring, progeny, daughters and sons
- spinster:** see "bachelor."
- spokesman:** speaker, representative, agent, press agent, press secretary, spokesman and spokeswoman (if used gender fairly), spokesperson
- sportsmanship:** fair play, sporting behavior, being a good sport, playing fair
- statesman:** political/world/government leader, diplomat, legislator, politician, public servant
- stewardess:** flight attendant, crew member, flight crew

- suffragette:** suffragist. Suffragette was used in England but in North America suffragist was the term chosen by women as they didn't want the "-ette" ending that suggests a sub-species. Suffragist is an inclusive term that applies to both men and women who work for voting rights for others, especially women.
- tomboy:** active/adventurous/boisterous child, live wire, rude/blunt/messy/rough/tough child.
- unmanned:** unstaffed, having no staff aboard, unpeopled, uninhabited, lacking crew, crewless, remote control, automatic pilot
- unwed mother:** mother, woman, head of household, single parent
- waitress:** waiter, server
- watchman:** watch, guard, security guard, guardian, sentry, lookout, caretaker, custodian, patroller, patrol
- wife:** See "husband."
- woman:** Although suggestions are made that this word should be replaced because it appears to be a sub-species of "man," what is more important is how the word is perceived and used today. "Woman" is a respected, acceptable and functional term as long as it is not used in a sexist context.
- woman's work:** Avoid this term unless referring to childbirth. There is no other work biologically specific to women.
- working man:** worker, employee, labourer, job holder, average worker, wage earner, blue-collar worker, operator, agent. Or, be specific: mechanic, librarian, electrician, teacher.
- working mother:** When used to describe women who work outside the home it implies that women

who work inside the home do not really work.  
Use wage-earner, job-holder, woman employed  
outside the home/in the paid workforce.

Women who work at home without being paid  
may be referred to as non-salaried woman,  
woman working inside the home/at home.

**workmanship:** work, construction, handiwork,  
handicraft, artisanry, artisanship, skilled-craft  
work, skill, craft, technique, style,  
competence, performance.

**workmen's compensation:** workers' compensation



## **Other Resources**

**The Dictionary of Bias-Free Usage: A Guide to Non-Discriminatory Language.** Rosalie Maggio, the Oryx Press, 1991, Phoenix, Arizona. (At Yukon College)

**Equity in Government Communications.** Women's Directorate and Department of Education, Government of New Brunswick. (At Women's Directorate)

**Gender Neutral Language.** Province of British Columbia, 1992. (At Women's Directorate)

**The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers.** Casey Miller and Kate Swift, 1988, Harper and Row. (At Women's Directorate)

**The Nonsexist Word Finder: A Dictionary of Gender-Free Usage.** Rosalie Maggio, The Oryx Press, 1987, Phoenix, Arizona. (At Yukon College and Women's Directorate)

**Words That Count Women In.** Ontario Women's Directorate, 1993. (At Women's Directorate)

PUBLISHED BY:

**Yukon**  
Government